

Attention: All Outdoor Activity Participants

By Dorothy Suter, Bureau of Consumer Health

We have all heard the saying, “There must be something in the water,” but it may not be as important to think about what is in the water as it is to think about what is on and in the water dispenser. As the summer months arrive and the temperature rises, a water cooler may be a welcoming oasis for golfers, softball players and fans, but if the water cooler is not properly maintained, the same water cooler that offered relief might supply an unwanted illness such as norovirus or hepatitis A. In order to make sure that there are no incidences of illness, it is important to properly maintain water-dispensing coolers.

First and foremost, it is important to make certain that the water and ice that is being supplied in the cooler is from an approved water supply that is in compliance with the necessary regulations. To further protect against contamination, hand washing is a must before handling water and ice. Even if family and friends will only consume the water, it is important to only handle ice with a clean and sanitized ice scoop. Make sure to fill the water dispenser in a clean area where the water will not be contaminated with dust, dirt or chemicals. The water hose being used to fill the dispenser must be only used to dispense water for drinking not for filling any other equipment. It is also important that the water cooler be placed in a clean area.

The next step to assure safety includes the type of dispenser being used. The dispenser should be certified or classified for sanitation by an ANSI accredited certification. The spigot should be a gravity flow design to prevent contamination during use. It is extremely important for the spigot to be cleaned at a minimum of once a day. When cleaning the spigot, use a wash-rinse sanitizer. After the spigot has been properly washed, it should be air dried in a clean space. If all the guidelines are adhered to during the water dispensing process, there should be no worrying about anything unhealthy being “in the water.”